

## MINUTES

Approved 8/3/07

### GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

**JUNE 8, 2007 2:00 P.M. SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM**

Present: G. Stevenson, Chair; P. Mackesey; M. Sigler; M. Hattery; D. Kiefer

Staff: C. Covert, Clerk of the Legislature; J. Wood, County Attorney; D. Squires, Finance Director; G. Potter, Information Technology Services Director; M. Lynch, Public Information Officer; V. Coggin, Assessment Director; P. Younger, Deputy County Administrator; A. Fitzpatrick, Personnel Commissioner

Guests: Media

#### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:09 p.m.

#### **Committee Chair's Report**

Mr. Stevenson did not have a report.

#### **Report from the County Administrator**

Mr. Whicher did not have a report.

#### **Report from the County Attorney**

Mr. Wood did not have a report.

#### **Report from the Finance Director**

Mr. Squires reported the auction on foreclosed property will be held June 12<sup>th</sup> and commented there was a large number of people who attended the preview. Mr. Squires said there are nine properties on the inventory list and that there were two redemptions today. He spoke about the ongoing problem in many counties with property owners being notified several times of foreclosure proceedings and waiting to the last day for redemption when a county has already taken title to their property.

Ms. Kiefer provided a report from the Environmental Management Council concerning the two properties discussed at the last meeting identified as having less than one acre of unique natural area. This was brought to the Executive Committee and Unique Natural Areas (UNA) Committee's attention. Although not discussed by either committee, the Chair of the Unique Natural Area Subcommittee reviewed that data and concurred with allowing the auction to occur on these properties. However, the Chair of the UNA Committee had concerns with the property in Freeville; Mr. Squires noted that property was one of the properties redeemed by the owner. Ms. Kiefer discussed process and suggested, although no request is being made to change the process, that when the Planning Department is considering guidelines and there are properties that fall within 100 feet distance of wetlands, they should be considered more carefully.

#### **Report from the Public Information Officer**

Ms. Lynch expressed her appreciation and said she enjoyed working with the Committee with getting public input on the issue of Assessment data on the Internet. The approach worked very well for this particular issue and she said the Public Information Advisory Board has been discussing various types of outreach efforts. Committee members also expressed their appreciation for the assistance. Ms.

Kiefer informed Ms. Lynch that the Ithaca Journal could not find her op-ed piece on privacy concerns from several years ago and therefore she could not provide a copy as intended.

### **Assessment Department**

#### **Data on the Internet**

Copies of supporting and opposing letters and comments received were distributed at this time. Mr. Stevenson noted that additional comments may have been received but not included in the packets.

Ms. Coggin felt the process was very educational. This issue was brought to the Committee for consideration because requests were made to make this information available to everyone. She said some of the concerns raised in the objection letters can be remedied; however, there is very little that can be done for the concerns of invasion or loss of privacy. The security issues raised are legitimate. However, in other counties no problems have been reported, but it does not mean they do not exist. She said the Internet and pictometry sites are much more dangerous than any information the Assessment Department would offer.

Ms. Kiefer commented on the proposed resolution and believes it should supercede the resolution adopted in 1999 not rescind it. She also recommends as a record of legislative policy including statements in the proposed resolution that identify items that should not be included on the Internet as part of the data. She continued discussion and questioned if search ability by an individual's name needed to be one of the features.

Ms. Mackesey asked if people using the site could log on so that it identifies user. Mr. Potter said the Advanced version requires user accounts to be set up and a procedure to do that. It is not a fool-proof system. The user-account passwords can be shared. Ms. Mackesey asked if there was any way to identify who has looked at someone's property. Ms. Coggin said the County can only monitor the number of hits. It would be practically impossible to identify the user. Ms. Kiefer said it is technologically possible, [but likely expensive.] Mr. Potter said it would be very expensive, and beyond his capabilities.

Mr. Hattery spoke about Ms. Kiefer's question relating to searching by individual name and said he could visualize based on his community someone wanting to look by name because they heard someone's property was for sale. He also spoke about the responses and said the one area that was raised as a concern as the oblique images and asked what the disadvantage would be if those images were not available. He believed those images were done for emergency responders only. Mr. Potter believes the oblique images referred to were done through an E911 grants program. The County does not post those images on any of its servers for Internet access use. They were purchased by Microsoft who then developed their own mapping imagery. Aerial photography is the only mapping application available. It was noted that there is likely a link from the Assessment's web page to those images but that could be removed if requested.

Ms. Coggin offered to provide a demonstration for the Committee if desired. She spoke briefly about the legalities of when the Assessment Department is allowed on a property to take pictures.

Further discussion followed and Mr. Sigler said he does not see the benefit to the County for doing this right now. Ms. Mackesey said she agrees and would like to discuss this further with her constituents.

Ms. Kiefer spoke about the loss of revenue of \$18,000 in the Assessment Department and asked Mr. Squires what loss of funding he may incur as mentioned at the last meeting. If this information is

made available, Mr. Squires said the next step is that people will want to review delinquent taxes and these would have to be converted to be accessed. The Finance Department receives \$25 when someone comes in to verify unpaid taxes.

In addition, Ms. Kiefer spoke about concerns of vulnerability from pictures such as handicap ramps and elder cottages.

Mr. Stevenson spoke about the existing information available to certain people under the guise that we know who they are. He does not believe we know who is looking at these data now since user names and passwords can be and are shared. If accountability is an issue, people should register.

Ms. Kiefer asked if the current policy as specified in the resolution from 1999 requiring users to provide specific information such as name, addresses (e-mail and postal), telephone numbers, etc. is being followed. Ms. Coggin said it is not a feasible process especially during the grievance process.

Mr. Hattery said he would like to know more about this and what is available.

It was MOVED by Mr. Stevenson to approve the following resolution. MOTION FAILED FOR A LACK OF A SECOND.

**RESOLUTION NO. – SUPPORTING THE PUBLISHING OF ASSESSMENT DATA ON THE INTERNET**

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Board of Representatives passed Resolution No. 217 of 1999 which outlined the terms that assessment data will be displayed on the Internet, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That Resolution No. 217 of 1999 is hereby rescinded,

RESOLVED, further, That the Department of Assessment is hereby instructed to open their data on the Internet to all members of the general public free of charge,

RESOLVED, further, That the Finance Director be authorized to appropriate \$18,000 from the Contingent Fund to the Assessment Department's budget Account No. 1355.41250 in order to offset the loss of revenue resulting from the change to an open free to the public database,

RESOLVED, further, That the fiscal target of the Assessment Department be adjusted by \$18,000.

**SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20**

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*Following a brief discussion, Ms. Coggin agreed to give a presentation on the ImageMate information at the next meeting.* Mr. Potter noted that the Office of Real Property Services is rolling this out at all levels of government to give the taxpayer the ability to calculate what their taxes are likely to be based on assessments and running comparable searches.

Three-Year Transitional Plan

Ms. Coggin explained that following discussions with the County Administrator and the budget directive to Departments, she is proposing that rather than presenting the full transitional plan now, she would first like to address the 2007 appropriation from the Contingent Fund separately from the three-year plan. The remainder of this will be addressed during the budget process this fall.

At this time, Ms. Coggin explained the line-item budget for the department and how the funding request would be spent. Mr. Whicher explained some of the discussions he has had with Ms. Coggin and said he fully supports this request and encouraged the Committee to approve it as well.

A brief discussion followed concerning staffing needs and Ms. Coggin said the department can no longer operate with 14 people; an additional staff person is needed.

It was MOVED by Mr. Hattery, seconded by Mr. Sigler, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve and submit the following resolution to the Budget and Capital Committee for approval:

**RESOLUTION NO. – CONTINGENT FUND APPROPRIATION FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE VALUATION PHASE IN YEAR 2007 OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ASSESSMENT 2008 TRIENNIAL REVALUATION AND INCREASE OF HOURS**

WHEREAS, in accordance with Resolution No. 207 of 2006, by the Tompkins County Legislature, the Department of Assessment is required to implement the Triennial Revaluation in 2008, and

WHEREAS, the Department of Assessment is currently experiencing staffing shortage due to the volume of work required to complete the valuation phase of said Triennial Revaluation, and

WHEREAS, hiring an additional Real Property Appraiser by September 2007 would remedy this problem, and

WHEREAS, the planned departure of the Assistant Director of Assessment by January 1, 2008, would require the hiring and subsequent training of a System Analyst by October, 2007, and

WHEREAS, there are no funds within the Department of Assessment to pay the cost associated with these expenses, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations and the Budget and Capital Committees, That the Director of Finance is hereby authorized and directed to make the following budget appropriation:

FROM:	A1990.54440	Contingent Fund	\$62,600
TO:	A1355.51000709	Real Property Appraiser	\$25,000
	A1355.51000TBD	Systems Analyst	\$15,000
	A1355.54303	Office Equipment	\$ 4,000
	A1355.54412	Travel/Training	\$ 3,000
	A1355.58800	Fringe	\$15,600

**SEQR ACTION:** TYPE II-20

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**County Administration**

**Resolution**

It was MOVED by Ms. Mackesey, seconded by Mr. Hattery, to approve and submit the following resolution to the full Legislature for approval. In response to Ms. Kiefer's question, Mr. Whicher said the County is responsible for the grant money and will be reimbursed by the State when the funds are spent. The project will be administered by Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG) and a steering group. The first phase will be setting up the overall structure. Mr. Hattery asked if the proposal calls for the creation of a separate organization called a "health care consortium" and was told by Mr. Whicher that it did.

A voice vote resulted as follows on the following resolution: Ayes – 5; Noes – 0.  
RESOLUTION CARRIED.

**RESOLUTION NO. - ACCEPTANCE OF NEW YORK STATE 2006-2007 SHARED MUNICIPAL SERVICES INCENTIVE (SMSI) GRANT-TOMPKINS COUNTY HEALTHCARE CONSORTIUM**

WHEREAS, the County, on behalf of the Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG) has been awarded a Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) Grant from the New York State Department of State, and

WHEREAS, the total grant amount to Tompkins County is \$266,030 to design and establish a Healthcare Consortium for all Municipalities within Tompkins County, and

WHEREAS, employee fringe costs are a significant component of the local Real Property Tax burden, and

WHEREAS, the cost of healthcare is the fastest growing component of employee fringe costs, and

WHEREAS, the savings to the taxpayers of Tompkins County in the first five years of the consortium is expected to exceed \$5,000,000, and

WHEREAS, all municipalities in Tompkins County are members of TCCOG, and

WHEREAS, all members of TCCOG have submitted resolutions in support of the SMSI grant, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee, That the County hereby accepts SMSI funds in the amount of \$266,030,

RESOLVED, further, That the County Administrator be authorized to execute any contracts related to this project,

RESOLVED, further, That the Director of Finance is authorized to make the following budget adjustment:

Revenue	CD9089.43089	State Aid	\$266,030
Appropriation	CD9089.54442	Program Expense	\$266,030

**SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20**

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## **Personnel Department**

### **Resolution - Military Pay**

It was MOVED by Ms. Mackesey, seconded by Mr. Sigler, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve and submit the following resolution to the Budget and Capital Committee for approval. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented that this is a renewal.

### **RESOLUTION NO. - AUTHORIZING TOMPKINS COUNTY TO PAY THE DIFFERENCE IN PAY BETWEEN MILITARY PAY AND BASE COUNTY SALARY TO COUNTY OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES WHILE PERFORMING ORDERED MILITARY DUTY**

WHEREAS, the New York State Military Law provides certain rights to public officers and employees absent on military duty as members of Reserve Forces or Reserve components of the Armed Forces of the United States, and

WHEREAS, County officers and employees on authorized military leave are entitled to all the rights and privileges set forth in said Military Law, and

WHEREAS, despite the rights and benefits afforded by said Military Law, calls to active duty often impose financial hardship on those summoned and their dependents, and

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 313 of 2002 and Resolution No. 231 of 2004, this Tompkins County Legislature authorized the payment of supplemental benefits to County officers and employees called to serve their country following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States through December 31, 2005, and

WHEREAS, there may be renewed need for activation of military personnel, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Budget and Capital, the Government Operations, and the Personnel Committee, That effective January 1, 2007, through December 31, 2008, the Tompkins County

General Fund will pay the difference between base County salary and military pay for up to 90 work days per calendar year, when the employee is called to active military duty. If military pay is equal to or in excess of County base salary, no payment will be made,

RESOLVED, further, That the Director of Finance will establish and notify Department Heads and affected employees of the procedures by which the differential shall be paid.

**SEQR ACTION:** TYPE II-20

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Policy – Military Pay

It was MOVED by Mr. Hattery, seconded by Mr. Sigler, to approve and submit the following resolution and policy to the Budget and Capital Committee for approval.

It was MOVED by Ms. Kiefer, seconded by Ms. Mackesey, to amend the policy to add the following language to the end of paragraph #3: “and more recent decisions by the Federal Executive”. A voice vote on the amendment resulted as follows: Ayes – 3 (Kiefer, Mackesey, and Stevenson); Noes – 2 (Hattery and Sigler). AMENDMENT CARRIED.

A voice vote on the resolution and the amended policy resulted as follows: Ayes – 5; Noes – 0. RESOLUTION AND POLICY CARRIED.

**RESOLUTION NO. - ADOPTION OF REVISED ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY 03-15  
 MILITARY LEAVE**

WHEREAS, there is a need to revise and update Administrative Policies, now therefore be it RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee, That the following Administrative Policy is hereby revised:

03-15 Military Leave

**SEQR ACTION:** TYPE II-20

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**MILITARY LEAVE**

Objective:	To establish a policy for military leave for County employees.	Policy Number	January 12, 1981
Reference:(Laws both state and local)	NYS Military Law, Article 11, §242 and Public Officers Law 86-632, resolution 244 of 2001, resolution 313 of 2002 and 232 of 2004	Effective Date	June 28, 1988, December 2, 2003, November 16, 2004
Policy Statement:	Employees on active military duty status shall be entitled to paid leave as allowed by NYS Military Law.	Resolution #	232
Procedure:		Department	Personnel

1. Any public officer or employee shall be deemed to have a leave of absence with pay while engaged in the performance of ordered military duty and while going to and returning from such duty. Such leave of absence with pay shall not exceed a total of thirty (30) days or twenty-two (22) work days in any one calendar year.

2. "Ordered military duty" shall mean any military duty performed in the service of the state or of the United States, including but not limited to attendance at any service school or schools conducted by the

armed forces of the United States, pursuant to orders issued by competent state or federal authority, without the consent of such public officer or employee.

3. In addition to the benefits available under Military Law noted above, Tompkins County has authorized extended benefits to County officers and employees called to serve their Country as a result of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, **and more recent decisions by the Federal Executive.**

- a. Resolution 244 of 2001, Resolution 313 of 2002, Resolution 232 of 2004 **and Resolution XXX of 2007** authorizes Tompkins County to pay the difference in pay between military and base County salary not to exceed a maximum of ninety (90) work-days through December 31, **2008.**

All public officers or employees ordered to military duty must provide a copy of such orders covering all duty days to the Personnel Department.

**Rollover Requests**

Ms. Kiefer commented that the rollover request forms are well presented.

County Administration

No action necessary.

Board of Elections

No action necessary. In response to a question, Ms. Cree said the County's voting machines will be used for the Presidential Primary Election.

Assessment Department

No action necessary.

County Attorney

Mr. Wood distributed a revised request of \$4,500 for office furnishings. He noted that during the budget process he will be reviewing his budget and believes a lower fiscal target will be presented. Mr. Whicher spoke about process and stated for the record that he strongly objects to a department adding a request to the agenda. He is not objecting to the actual request only adding it to the agenda. Mr. Wood said this was his misunderstanding of the process and apologized.

It was MOVED by Mr. Sigler, seconded by Ms. Kiefer, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve and submit the following rollover request to the Budget and Capital Committee:

\$4,500 – Office Furnishings: office chairs, credenza, file cabinet

County Clerk

Following a brief discussion concerning the source of certified funds, it was MOVED by Mr. Hattery, seconded by Mr. Sigler, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve and submit the following rollover request to the Budget and Capital Committee:

Archives grant completion - scanning backfiled land records into EDMS (Challenge Industries is vendor)	Acct. No. 1410.54442	\$17,407

Minutes  
 Government Operations Committee  
 June 8, 2007

Microfilming of civil papers - \$3,500 (Challenge), conversion of microfilm to digital images - \$14,200 (Challenge), and microfilm duplication - \$12,000 (Challenge)	<i>Acct. No. 1410.54442</i>	\$29,700
Inventorizing and scanning archival records in Records Center	<i>Acct. No. 1410.54442</i>	\$10,000
Blade Server ( to replace novell server, SQL server & web server)	<i>Acct. No. 1410.52206</i>	\$50,000
Installing shelving for off-site records in Records Center	<i>Acct. No. 1410.52210</i>	\$15,000
Additional public access computer terminals in Clerk's Office	<i>Acct. No. 1410.52206</i>	\$8,000

Finance

No action necessary.

Legislature

It was MOVED by Ms. Kiefer, seconded by Mr. Stevenson, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve and submit the following rollover request to the Budget and Capital Committee:

\$20,000 - Professional Services – scanning and printing of Journal of Proceedings

**Finance Department**

Corrections to Tax Roll – 2007

The Committee briefly reviewed the information concerning the tax roll corrections (chargeback amounts) for 2007.

**Approval of Minutes**

It was MOVED by Mr. Hattery, seconded by Mr. Sigler, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve the minutes of May 11, 2007 meeting as corrected.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:48 p.m.